





THE UGLY DUCKLING.

It was glorious summer weather in the country, and the golden corn, the green oats, and the haystacks piled up in the meadows looked lovely. On his long red legs the stork walked about, while he chattered in the language of Egypt which his mother had taught him.

In a bright sunny spot stood a farmhouse, and not far off under some great burdock leaves, sat a duck waiting for her eggs to hatch. She was beginning to get tired, for the young ones were a long time coming out of their shells and very few visitors came to see her. At last one shell broke,

and then another, and a living creature came out of each crying "peep,

peep."

The little ducklings

gazed around them and cried

"How large the world is."

"Do you think this is the

whole world?" their mother

asked, "wait till you see the



garden, the world stretches far beyond that to the parson's meadow."

"Well, and how are you getting on?" said an old duck who came to pay her a visit. "There is still the largest

egg not hatched," said the duck. "Let me look at the egg that will not hatch," said the old duck. "Yes, as I thought, it is a turkey's egg, be advised by me, leave it alone, and teach your other children to swim." "I think I will sit on it a little longer," said the duck.

At last the largest egg cracked, and out came the young one. It was very big and very ugly. "We shall find out whether it is a turkey when we go to the water," said the mother duck. The



next day the ducklings were taken down to the water, and one by one the young ones jumped in after the mother duck, and swam about quite



easily, and the ugly duckling swam about too.

"He is not a turkey," said his mother, "He is my own child, and when you come to look at him properly he is not so very ugly." Then the young ones were taken to the farmyard to be introduced. "Turn out your toes, and spread your feet wide apart," said their mother. The ducklings did as they were told, but the ducks in the yard

stared at them, and one flew at the ugly duckling and pecked his neck. "He is so big and ugly," said the spiteful duck.

And as day by day went on, the poor duckling who had come out of his shell last of all was quite miserable because he was so ugly. He was driven about by every one, and even his mother said she was sorry he had ever been born. So at last he flew over the fence frightening the little birds in the hedge. "They are frightened because I am so ugly," he said, and he flew on till he came to a moor where wild





"He was driven about by everyone."



ducks lived, and the wild ducks came around and stared at him saying, "What kind of a duck are you? You are extremely ugly, but that won't matter if you do not want to marry any of us." The poor duckling! He was not thinking of marrying, he only wanted to stay among the reeds on the moor.

When he had been there two days, two wild geese came, they were very young and very saucy. "We like you," they said, "for you are so very ugly, if you wish you may go with us to another moor not far from here. There are some pretty wild geese there, not any





"A big dog thrust his nose quite close to him."



of them married. You may have a chance of getting a wife although you are so ugly."

"Pop, pop," sounded in the air, and down among the rushes fell those two geese dead. "Pop, pop," sounded everywhere about, for sportsmen were all around with guns and dogs. The poor duckling was dreadfully frightened, and a big dog thrust his nose quite close to him, but went splash into the water without touching him. "Oh, how thankful I am that I am so ugly, for even a dog will not bite me," said the duckling.

It was late in the day before all became quiet, and then the duckling hastened from the moor. But soon a storm arose and he could hardly struggle on. At last he came to a cottage. The door was not quite closed so the duckling slipped in and sheltered for the night. A woman, a cat, and a hen lived in





this cottage and in the morning they discovered the stranger.

"Oh, what a prize," said the woman, "I hope I shall have some duck's eggs." For her sight was not very good, and she thought the duckling was a big duck.

Now the cat and the hen always said "We and the world," for they thought they were quite half of the world and the better half too. "Can you lay eggs?" asked the hen of the duckling. "Can you purr?" said the

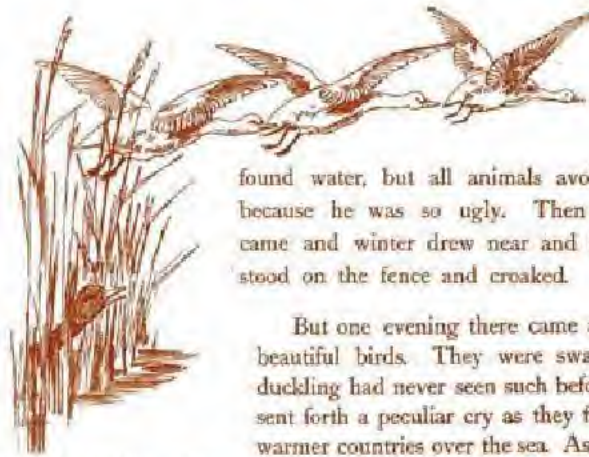
cat, "No, then you can have no opinions." So the poor duckling sat in a corner feeling very dull and longing to have a swim. But when he said this they said he must be crazy. "What an absurd idea," said the hen. "Ask the cat if he would like to swim about on the water, ask our mistress. Do you think she would like to swim or dive. I advise you to learn to purr or lay eggs as quickly as possible."

But the duckling felt he must go out again into the world, so he left the cottage and soon





"The raven stood on the fence and croaked."



found water, but all animals avoided him because he was so ugly. Then Autumn came and winter drew near and the raven stood on the fence and croaked.

But one evening there came a flock of beautiful birds. They were swans. The duckling had never seen such before. They sent forth a peculiar cry as they flew off to warmer countries over the sea. As they rose the ugly duckling felt a very strange sensation. He whirled round and round in the water uttering such a curious cry that he felt quite frightened. He knew he could never forget those lovely birds, and longed to be as beautiful as they.

But the weather grew colder and at last he lay frozen in the ice. A peasant who was going by saw the poor creature and took





"A new swan has come."



him home where the warmth revived him. But the duckling was frightened when the children wanted to play with him, and in his terror he fluttered first into the milk-pan and then into the flour-bin. The woman struck at him with the tongs but he managed to escape through the open door.

All the misery the poor duckling suffered would be too sad to relate. He awoke one morning to find himself on a moor. The warm sun was shining, and he felt that his wings were strong as he rose high into the air. They carried him into a large garden. All around was beautiful for it was early spring. Then swimming along came three lovely swans.





"I will fly to these kingly birds", he said, "perhaps they will kill me because I am so ugly, and dare to go near them, but that would not matter, it would be better to be killed by them than pecked by the ducks hustled by the hens, and driven away by the maiden who feeds

the poultry, or dying of cold and hunger in the winter."

So he flew to the water and swam towards the beautiful creatures. As soon as they saw the stranger the swans came quickly towards him with outstretched wings.

The poor duckling bent his head expecting death. But what did he see reflected in the clear waters? It was his own image, not any longer a dark, grey, ugly bird, but a lovely graceful swan. Being born in a duck's nest does not matter to a bird if he is hatched from a swan's egg. He now felt glad that he had suffered sorrow and trouble, for it caused him to enjoy so much more all the pleasure and happiness around him; for the lovely swans swam about the new-comer, and they stroked his neck with their beaks welcoming him.

Presently some children came into the garden and threw bread





into the water, and they clapped their hands joyously shouting "A new swan has come, and he is the most beautiful of all, he is so young and pretty."

Then the happy bird did not know what to do, he felt so overjoyed, but he did not feel proud. He had always been badly treated because he was so ugly, and now he heard that he was the most lovely of birds. Then he rustled his feathers and curved his graceful neck and from his heart he cried. "I did not dream of such happiness as this when I was an ugly duckling."

